

Tempers rise ✓ over manager's performance

Donato proposes
hiring outside firm to
evaluate MacDonald

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After receiving what he said were a number of calls regarding the performance of Town Manager Richard MacDonald, Selectman Chris Donato proposed the board hire an outside consultant to do an evaluation of MacDonald's performance.

The idea was not well received by his fellow selectmen.

Prior to making his proposal, Donato reached out to Cape HR Partners LLC to see if they would be willing to do the work.

Donato said the business is managed by a pair of women who worked in human resources for the Boston Globe. The company's Web site says that

owner Nancy Newton has 25 years of experience as a human resources manager and her partner, Cynthia Zizzo worked in employee relations for 10 years.

Selectmen Chairman Elizabeth Sullivan disagreed with Donato's idea, stating that the evaluation process is spelled out in the town's bylaws, "we have a tool that sets certain criteria."

No evaluation of MacDonald was done last year, an oversight that Selectman Jonathan Witten, who chaired the board at the time, took responsibility for.

According to Sullivan, the board of selectmen has an "obligation" to evaluate the town manager's performance. In the past, a form was used by each selectman rating the town manager's performance on a scale of one to five. After each selectman makes their evaluation, the board meets with the town manager and the chairman then issues a report.

She also doubted hiring "someone with no ability or experience in municipal government" at an estimated cost of \$4,500 to do the evaluation. Instead, she thought, if an evaluation was needed, it could be performed by the personnel board.

Further, she questioned Donato's actions. "How is it you felt comfortable interviewing someone on your own?"

Donato shot back, "how do I make an informed recommendation without it?"

"We're losing employees, are you not aware of a moral problem in this town?"

Sullivan agreed that their had been many complaints.

"Doesn't that mean there's a problem?" asked Donato

In arguing for his idea, Donato pointed out that a consultant had been hired to do an evaluation of the Department of public works.

Sullivan disagreed with the analogy, saying he was comparing hiring an outsider to evaluate one person, as compared to an entire department.

Recently, members of two police unions, along with members of the DPW, have taken

votes of no confidence in MacDonald's performance, according to Donato.

Several mid-level managers at the DPW also wrote a letter of no confidence in DPW director Peter Buttus, who said "that's water under the bridge that was way back when," and that things had settled down in his department.

Sullivan said a selectmen's meeting was "not the forum" for discussing personnel issues and Witten agreed, saying particular complaints should be reviewed in executive session.

In a later interview, Sullivan said she had no objection to the idea of using a new evaluation tool, but that Donato "wasn't clear on what he was trying to accomplish."

A call asking for comment from Town Manager Richard MacDonald was not returned by press time.